

Now that I may wipe off this Scandal which the Bi-
The Texts examined which Papists
cite out of the Bible for the
Proof of their Doctrine

OF
MERITS

IMPUR

Decemb. 3. 1688. *Henl Wharton.*

THE Doctrine of *Merit*, although it was a great
 occasion of that happy Reformation which was
 made by the first Protestants from the Errors
 and Superstitions of the Church of Rome, yet
 has of late been so refined and new-mo'dell'd by some of
 that Communion, that we and they are made to agree
 even in that Point which was in a great measure the
 cause of the first separation betwixt us.

We were wont to be charged with denying the neces-
 sity of good Works, and that Mens Salvation does at all
 depend on them. Not now that Objection is laid aside,
 and our greatest Crime, as to this Doctrine of *Merit*, is,
 That we charge those of that Church with what they
 do not hold, and pretend a difference when both Parties
 are of the same Mind.

Now that I may wipe off this Scandal which the Bishop of *Condom* and others are pleased to lay upon us, I shall endeavour to state the case fairly betwixt us, and then to shew that the Scriptures produced in the defence of that Doctrine of Merit which we find fault with, give no countenance at all unto it.

As to the stating the Case aright, consider,

First, That we agree an eternal Reward to become due upon the performance of such Conditions for which God has been pleased to promise to bestow it. Some of the Church of *Rome* (as will be shewn by and by) go further, and make the Reward to depend upon something else besides God's Promise, but they all agree it to be plain from Scripture that God has promised it; and if so, then there is as much reason to expect it upon the account of such a Promise as upon any other account whatsoever. For it would be contrary to God's most excellent Nature. It would argue either want of Power or Righteousness in him, not to make good what he had promised.

So much therefore is on all hands maintained both by them and us, that an eternal Reward will certainly be bestowed where Men take care to perform the conditions upon which it is promised.

Secondly, We agree good Works to be the conditions without which an eternal Reward can never be obtained. Although we do not set so high a value upon good Works as some of the Church of *Rome* do, yet we go so far with them, as to assert them to be the means prescribed by God for the obtaining of Salvation. We declare that without Holiness no Man shall see God, and that with fear and trembling we ought to work out our own Happiness, and thereby teach as great a necessity of good Works as they who place so much trust and confidence in them.

In the beginning of the Reformation such mighty things were spoken of Faith, that some of the Church of *Rome* imagined that the first Reformers did wholly exclude good Works from having any thing to do in Mans Salvation. Whereas they were so far from thinking any thing of this nature, that they accounted Faith it self a good Work; and when they explained the Nature thereof, they always discoursed of it as *working by Love*, and productive of an holy and virtuous Behaviour. The reason why they magnified Faith at such a rate was the same with what happened in the beginning of the Church in the Apostles Time. For as the Apostle *St. Paul* then found many to rely too much upon Legal Performances and Pharisaical Observances, so likewise did the first Reformers in the beginning of the Reformation find those of the Church of *Rome* to depend above measure upon external Performances, such as Alms-giving, Pilgrimages, abstinence from Meats, &c. To wean them off from doing which, they imitated the same Apostle in extolling Faith, and the Merits of a crucified Saviour. Although at the same time they likewise taught that belief in Christ would avail them nothing, unless they added thereto an holy and virtuous Conversation.

So far therefore we are willing to go along with those of the Church of *Rome*, as to assert good Works to be so far forth the cause of an eternal Reward, that it cannot be obtained without them.

Thirdly, We agree God's Grace to be necessary to enable us to do any good Work. Although there has been found amongst those of the Church of *Rome* such as have run into *Pelagius* his Error in asserting Works done without God's Grace and Assistance to be good: yet these have been but few, and such their Opinion

Bell. de Just.
lib. 5. c. 13.

has, as *Bellarmino* relates, been condemned by two of their own Popes, *Pius V.* and *Gregory XIII.* The generality do affirm it to be necessary in order to render them capable of any Reward that they be adopted the Sons of God, and have his Spirit dwelling in them, for enabling them to perform any sort of vertuous Actions. And this is what we assert as well as they.

Fourthly, We are ready to affirm it to be agreeable to God's Wisdom and Goodness to bestow a Reward upon good Works, although he had never promised it. For good Works are performed by the Assistance of God's Grace, they are done with great difficulty, they carry a resemblance to what is always inherent in the Divine Nature, they flow from the Love of God, and are pleasing and acceptable unto him. For which reasons it may well become so wise and gracious a Being, as God is, to bestow some signal Mark of his Favour upon them. For by this means he shews the distinction betwixt good and bad Deeds, he encourageth the love of Vertue and Holiness, and gives publick testimony of his pure and excellent Nature, in approving only those things which are worthy to be approved by him.

Lastly, We allow that the word *Merit* may be used in an improper sense, so as to signify to procure or obtain, without ever considering the worth of the Person, or the Work itself. For thus several Ecclesiastical Writers, as well as others, have used it; and when the Fathers call good Works *Merits*, as they often do, they mean no more thereby than that they are acceptable to God, and will procure a Reward for those who perform them. In which sense several *Prælati* have used the word in their publick *Constitutions*. And although when we speak of good Works, we forbear now a days to use the word *Merit*, yet it is not because we dissent from the Fathers,

Wertemberg.
Confess. de
bon. Op.
August. Conf.
fess. Artic. 6.

in the use of it, according to the more general signification, but because they of the Church of *Rome* have used it in a signification which we can no ways allow of. For,

Sixthly, Merit, in the more proper signification, importeth Action, or Actions, to which there is a Reward in Justice due, *viz.* when it doth not flow meerly from the kindness of the Giver, but from respect to the worthiness of the Action, so as that the Doer has reason to complain of Injustice done him, if it be not bestowed upon him.

Now it is this signification of the word which has given occasion to such Disputes betwixt us, and them of the Church of *Rome*, concerning the Doctrine of Merit of good Works. But yet we do not differ alike from them all. For,

1. There has been at all times in that Church such as have with us disclaimed all kind of *Merit* in this last sense, and have frankly owned that by Grace they were saved, and not upon the account of their own Works. Amongst whom we may reckon three of their own Popes, as *Gregory the Great*, who affirms that the best Men will find no Merit in their best Actions. *Urban IV.*, who in a Commentary upon the *Miserere*, has these expressions, *I do not beg for my own Merits sake, or for thy justice or my own——or for my Works sake, wherein I have miserably gone astray, but for thy great Mercy.* And *Adrian VI.* who positively asserts our Merits to be a broken Reed which pierce the hand of him that leans upon them, that our best Actions are mixt with Impurities, and when we have done all that we can, we are unprofitable Servants. As well as others both before and after the Council of *Trent*. Now with these we heartily agree, and by what they have declared in this matter, do think we have

Moral. l. 9, 2.

Disparage concerning the merit of good Works, p. 7.

Adrian de Sacr. Euch. f. 61.

By Ush's Challenge.

Dr. Still. ex. m. of the Council of Trent.

Gerhard. Conf. Cath.

have a mighty advantage of such of the Church of Rome as pretend *Tradition* for their Doctrine of *Merit*, as they do for other things, since it is so easy to shew them that nothing like it was known in the first Ages of the Church, and that many great Men of their own Communion have all along taught contrary to it.

2. There have been others, who although they seem to make a Reward to depend wholly upon God's Promise in Christ, yet at the same time will needs have it that good Works may be truly said to be meritorious of it. Thus *Bellarmino* after he has proved at large good

De Just. l. 5. Works to be meritorious, has a Chapter on purpose to shew, That God's Promise is requisite to make them so. Thus the Bishop of *Condom* declares it out of the Council of *Trent*, to be the sense of the Catholick Church,

Expof. of the That eternal Life ought to be proposed to the Children of
Doct. Sect. 7. God, both as a Grace, which is mercifully promised to them by the Mediation of our Lord *Iesus Christ*, and as a *Recompence* which is faithfully rendered to their good Works and Merits in virtue of this Promise.—— And that God will have those Gifts which he bestows upon them to be their Merits.

Thus likewise the Representer makes the good Catholick to affirm, That through the Merits of Christ
Papist misrepr. & repr. ch. 6. the good Works of a just Man proceeding from Grace, are so acceptable to God, that through his Goodness and Promise they are truly meritorious of eternal Life.

Now as to these, all that we can charge them with is with speaking improperly. We say as well as they that the Reward depends upon God's Promise, but then we say likewise that this destroys the nature of true Merit. For true Merit consists in having upon the account of the worthiness of the Action, a just Right and Title to a Reward; so as that although he had no promise thereof, a Man might lawfully complain of Injustice

Justice done him, should it not be bestowed upon him, but he who wholly depends upon a Promise for what is bestowed, cannot be properly said to have such a Title as this is. For it is the Promise which gives such an one a Title to the Reward, and not his own Worthiness, which is that which is always supposed in the nature of true Merit. And therefore to say, as the Representer does, That good Works through God's Goodness and Promise are truly meritorious, is the same thing as to say, That God's Promise of a Reward does make good Works to be in themselves deserving of a Reward, although there had been no Promise made of it. Which is certainly a very improper way of speaking. But yet we should be glad, had we nothing more to charge any of the Church of Rome with, as to this Doctrine of Merit, but impropriety of Speech. Whereas to our great trouble we find others gone so far as,

3. To assert, That God's Promise is indeed annexed to the Works of just Men, but yet that belongeth no way to the Reason of the Merit, but cometh rather to the Works which we already not worthy only, but also meritorious. Thus Vasquez with a great deal more to the same purpose in several parts of his Writings. Which is agreeable to what Bellarmine asserts, viz. That the good Works of just Persons do merit eternal Life condignly, not only by reason of God's Covenant and Acceptation, but also by reason of the Work it self, so that in a good Work proceeding from Grace there may be a certain proportion and equality unto the Reward of eternal Life. As likewise to that of Cajetan, That the good Works of just Men are meritorious of eternal Life condignly, although there were no Divine Compact, &c.

Now this is the Doctrine which we find so much fault with, and that upon these following accounts.

1. Be-

Vasquez Com-
men. in 1. 2.
qu. 114. disp.
214. c. 8.

Bell. de Just.
l. 5. c. 17.

Cajetan in 1. 2.
qu. 114. art. 3.

1. Because we are bound to pay all manner of Obedience to God, although we were not sure of any Reward hereafter, and that upon the account of our Creation, and that constant supply of outward Blessings, such as Life, Health, &c. which God is pleased to afford us; and likewise, because such is the nature of all vertuous Actions, that they do really tend to promote even our present Ease and Advantage. For where we are out of Gratitude, present Interest, and upon the account of God's Supreme Authority over us, bound to make our Actions as good as we can, although there were no future Reward: in such a case, how can we be said truly to merit any thing further from him than what we at present enjoy?

2. Because although many of our Works are good, yet many of them are evil too; and if God should deal strictly with us, instead of rewarding our good Deeds, he might, if he pleased, punish our evil ones. Such indeed is his Mercy, that for the sake of a crucified Saviour he is willing to allow of Repentance for what is past, but since nothing which we can do could have merited even this at his hands, much less can our best Actions, when our Transgressions are so many, give us a Title to an eternal Reward.

3. Because even our best Actions are imperfect, and stand in need of God's Clemency and Forgiveness to cover their Defects, and then what just Claim can we have to a Reward upon their account?

4. Because, whatever is praise-worthy in us, is not performed by our own power and Skill, but by the Assistance of God's Grace. God may, if he pleases, reward his own Gifts, but it would be no good manners in us to pretend that he was bound to do it, or that his own Gifts can properly be called our Merits.

5. Be-

5. Because there is no equality or proportion betwixt the best Actions of us finite imperfect Creatures, and the eternal Favour of an infinitely wise and gracious God.

Having thus set down what in the Doctrine of Merit we find fault with, and for what reasons I know it will be objected, that in this case I oppose only the Opinion of private Men, and that the Council of *Trent*, which is the Standard of true Catholick Doctrine, has taught otherwise.

I answer ;

1. That since there has been such in the Church of *Rome*, and those Men of great note too, who have taught this Doctrine of Merit, and since it has had, and has I doubt still a very great influence upon several of that Communion, so as to make them place too much Religion in external Performances, it is very requisite it should be opposed whether the Council of *Trent* teach it or no.

2. That if the Council of *Trent* should be supposed not to have taught this Doctrine in express terms, yet there is great reason to believe that it did at least intend to give great countenance unto it. For,

1st. The Council knew well enough that such a Doctrine was maintained by some of that Church, that the Practices thereupon ensuing were very scandalous, that the first Reformers clamoured mightily against it, and therefore unless they had had a mind to countenance it, why did they not give the World satisfaction by declaring expressly against it? *An.* 1354 we find one *Guido*, an *Austin* Friar, for holding this Doctrine, sentenced by the Chancellour and the Theological Faculty of *Paris*, to make the following Recantation, *I said against a Batchelour of the Order of Predicant Friars in conference*

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with

Biblioth. Patr.
tom. 14. p. 347.
Edit. Colon.

with him, that a Man merits eternal Life by way of Congdignity, i. e. That he would be injured if it were not bestowed upon him. And I writ that God would do him an Injury in such a case. And this Opinion I then approved, I now revoke it as false, heretical, and blasphemous. Now why did not the Council take some such course as this was, to express their dislike of such a Doctrine? or, since they were so free of their *Anathema's*, if they did not approve it themselves, or were not desirous that others should, why did they not *Anathematise* all such as held good Works to be truly meritorious? But they were so far from doing this, that,

2dly. We find an *Anathema* denounced against him who asserts, *The good Works of any justified Person to be so much the Gifts of God, as not to be also the Merits of the same justified Person; or that he who is justified by the good Works which are done by him through the Grace of God, and Merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living Member, does not truly merit increase of Grace, eternal Life, increase of Glory.* Whatever may have been their Opinion who did make this Canon, or however they may have expressed themselves in other places, it is plain that the manner of expressing themselves in this Canon, is sufficient enough to make the generality of People believe, that they held good Works to be meritorious in the strictest sense. They do not indeed explain what they mean by *true merit*; but because they have not done it, this is enough to make it suspicious that they at least intended it should be understood according to the most proper and most usual signification.

And that it has been thus generally taken, may appear from these following Observations.

1. That several Divines of the Church of Rome, some

some of which lived in the time of the Council, have shown, that *truly to merit* must be opposed to any improper signification of the word.

Dr. Stilling. the
Council of
Trent exam.
p. 59, 60.

2. That in the *Index Expurgatorius*, set out according to the Order of the Council by Cardinal *Quiroga*, an. 1584, several passages, which deny the merit of good Works, are commanded to be blotted out of several Books, as more particularly out of the Works of *Erasmus* and *Johannes Fernus*. But that which is most remarkable in this Case, and which has been taken notice of by several Learned Men who have treated of this Subject, is, That out of a publick Office of the Church these following Questions and Answers were by the said *Index* ordered to be expunged.

Bp Ushers Chal-
lenge. p. 421.
Dr. Still. Conve.
of Trent. exam.
p. 61.
Gerhard. Con-
fess. Cath. l. 2.
p. 3. art. 23. c.
8. p. 769.

Q. *Dost thou believe that thou shalt come to Heaven not by thy own Merits, but by the Virtue and Merit of Christ's Passion?*

A. *I do believe it.*

Q. *Dost thou believe that Christ died for our Salvation, and that none can be saved by their own Merits, or any other way, but by the Merits of his Passion?*

A. *I do believe it.*

3. That the *Rhemists* who when for the benefit of good Catholicks they by publick permission explain the Scriptures, must be supposed to do it according to the sense of the Council, do maintain the Merit of good Works in the strictest sense. For they assert, That *Mans Works done by Christ's Grace do condignly or worthily deserve eternal Joy*. And That all good Works done by God's Grace after the first Justification be truly and properly meritorious, and fully worthy of everlasting Life, and that thereupon Heaven is the due and just Stipend, Crown or Recompence which God by his Justice oweth to the Persons so working by his Grace. For he rendreth or repayeth Hea-

Rhem. Annot.
in Luc. 20. 35.

Idem, in 2 Tim.
4. 8.

ven, say they, as a just Judge, and not only as a merciful Giver, and the Crown which he payeth is not only of Mercy, or Favour, or Grace, but also of Justice.

Dr. Still. *Conve.*
of Trent *exam.*
p. 73.

4. That several, even of late years, when they give us the sense of the Council about this matter, do expressly say, that the Council did intend to establish such a Merit of good Works as bears a proportion to the Glory of Heaven.

These Observations make it evident what has been generally thought to be the sense of the Council of Trent as to this matter; and all that can be replied in defence of the Council is what the Bishop of Condom has picked out of the Council's manner of expressing it self, viz.

That although the Council asserts good Works to be meritorious, yet,

1. It supposeth those good Works to be done by the Assistance of God's Grace.

2. It proposeth an eternal Reward as a Recompence which is faithfully rendred to Mens good Works in virtue of God's Promise.

I answer;

1. That although we should allow the Assistance of God's Grace, not to destroy the nature of true Merit, as it really does: yet even good Works performed by God's Assistance, cannot be said to be truly meritorious; because they are still imperfect by reason of that mixture of humane Infirmary which still accompanies them. Were they the effects of God's Grace alone, this might give them a Title to a Reward; but that Alloy which humane Weakness gives them, abates their value, and makes the free Grace of God to be absolutely necessary for the acceptance of them (although done by his Assistance) to that Reward which they were not otherwise deserving of.

2. That

2. That since the Council proposeth an eternal Reward as a Recompence which is faithfully rendred to Mens good Works in virtue of God's Promise, they either dealt dishonestly in afterwards establishing good Works to be meritorious, without so much as making mention of the Promise, and thereby giving countenance to the Opinion of those who held good Works to be in their own natures truly meritorious; or else if they were sincere, they expressed themselves in very improper terms; since the dependance upon God's Promise for a Reward, does (as we before observed) wholly destroy the nature of true Merit.

3. That we do much rejoice if any of the Church of *Rome* are sincerely and truly of the same mind with us, as to this Doctrine of Merit, or that they can any way shew the Council of *Trent* to have said nothing about it, but what we teach. But it is evident that several of that Church, and those Men of great Authority, have been of another Opinion themselves, and likewise thought the Council of *Trent* to have taught otherwise about it than we do. And therefore the Bishop of *Condom* and others are much to be blamed for charging us with misrepresenting their Council as to this point, since we lay nothing to its charge but what we can sufficiently prove to have been maintained by those who have both as much right to interpret, and as much reason to understand the Council's meaning as they can pretend to have.

4. That altho these new Modellers, when they speak of good Works being meritorious, according to the sense of the Council of *Trent*, do intermix something concerning the Promise of God, as if it were necessary to make them so, yet they never explain to us the nature of true Merit, they never in express terms tell us
(as

(as they ought to do) that good Works in themselves are not truly meritorious of a Reward, but (as the Council of *Trent* before them) they use such ambiguous and doubtful expressions as may both enable them to defend themselves; as if they held nothing more than what we hold; and at the same time give countenance to the Doctrine of Merit in the most proper and strictest sense.

5. That the Faith and Practice of the generality of the Church of *Rome*, in relation to Purgatory, Indulgences, Works of Supererogation, Penance, &c. (all which have a near relation to this Doctrine of Merit) are still as false and scandalous as ever, and therefore it is much to be suspected, That the Doctrine of good Works being in themselves truly meritorious, is likewise now as generally believed, and as much thought to be the Doctrine of the Council of *Trent*, as any other of their false Doctrines.

Having thus cleared our selves from the Imputation of laying that to the charge of those of the Church of *Rome*, which, as is pretended, they do not hold, I shall now proceed to shew that the Scriptures produced by *Bellarmino* and others upon this occasion, do give no countenance to the forementioned Doctrine of Merit which we find so much fault with.

Now the Texts of Scripture which are quoted upon this occasion being very numerous, I shall chuse to follow *Bellarmino's* Method, who has reduced them under several Heads, and endeavour to shew that the Inferences which he makes from them are false and absurd.

The first Head of Scriptures is of such where eternal Life is called a Reward or Wages.

Mat. 5. 12. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

Mat.

Mat. 20. 8. *Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire.*

From whence it is urged, that if eternal Life be properly called a *Reward* or *Wages*, then may good Works, upon which it is bestowed, be rightly stiled *Merits*.

I answer ;

1. That *Wages* or *Reward* does indeed, according to the strictest sense, denote a proportion betwixt the Work done, and what is bestowed ; but according to the more loose signification of the word, nothing more is meant than that some wished for, and expected advantage does accrue to another upon his performance of such and such conditions, although there be no proportion betwixt such an advantage and the performance of them, but the bestowing of it does wholly depend upon the bounty of him that gives it. Which distinction is approved of by *St. Paul*, when he makes a difference (as he does, *Rom. 4. 4.*) betwixt a *Reward of Grace*, and a *Reward of Debt*. And therefore we may as well say, that because the word *to buy* does commonly suppose a price either given or to be given, therefore it is so to be interpreted in that passage of *Isaiah, chap. 55. 1. Come, buy Wine and Milk without money, or without price :* or that *Nebuchadnezzar* that wicked King did really *merit* something from God, because it is said, *Ezek. 29. 19. That he gave him Egypt as Wages for his Army :* as that where-ever the word *Reward* or *Wages* is found, there must necessarily be an equality betwixt it, and those good Actions of which by the Grace and Favour of God, it is made the Consequent, when otherwise it would not at all have belonged to them.

2. As to the Parable of the Labourers, it is so far from countenancing the Doctrine of Merit, that it directly tends to overthrow it. For,

(1.) If

(1.) If the Hire, here spoken of, was bestowed in proportion to the Labourers Work, how came it to pass that he who came early into the Vineyard received no greater Wages than he who worked but one hour?

Janfen. Conc.
Evang.

(2.) The design of the Parable is (as *Janfenius* a Popish Writer has observed) to shew that in the last Day those who were here last should be accounted first, *i. e.* That the Apostles and others who seemed Men of mean condition shall be preferred even before the Scribes and Pharisees; and that the Gentiles who were last converted shall be made equal to the *Jews* who were first called to work in the Vineyard of the Lord, and had the Gospel first preached to them. All which tends to set forth the Goodness and Liberality of God, and at the same time to suppress the vain Conceits of such who might be apt to rely too much upon their own Merits.

Bell. de Just.
l. 5. c. 3.

3. It is fit that we here observe, that an eternal Reward is in Scripture stiled an Inheritance; *Col. 3. 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance; for we serve the Lord Christ.* Now as it is an Inheritance, it depends upon the free Gift of God, whose Children we are by Adoption, and consequently it cannot be reckoned as a Debt that is properly due unto us upon the account of our Works. *Bellarmino* indeed will needs have it both to be an Inheritance, and a Debt due to us upon the account of our Works, because it is more honourable for us, he saith, to *receive something upon the account of our Works, than wholly to depend upon the Promise of God for it.* In answer to whom it may be returned, that we ought not to consider what would be most honourable for us, as how things in their own nature, or according to God's Appointment, are.

We find it impossible that our best Deeds should be truly meritorious of an eternal Reward, and then we must

must not go about to assert that they are meritorious, because it would be more honourable for us if they were. It is honour enough for us that God is pleased to take pity of us when we don't deserve it, and to make us Partakers of an inestimable Reward which we have no pretence to. And therefore we ought to give him the Glory thereof, to whom it is due, and as long as we are happy, not be so arrogant as to pretend that our own Works are the meritorious cause thereof.

Another Head is of such Scriptures, wherein the Heavenly Reward is said to be given to Men according to the measure and proportion of their Works and Labour.

Psal. 62. 12. — For thou rendrest to every Man according to his Work.

Matth. 16. 27. For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father with his Angels; and then he shall reward every Man according to his Works.

Luke 6. 38. With the same measure that ye meet withal, it shall be measured to you again.

Rom. 2. 6. — Who will render to every Man according to his Deeds.

1 Cor. 3. 8. And every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own Labour.

Gal. 6. 8. For he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.

Revel. 22. 12. And behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man as his Work shall be.

From which Scriptures it is inferred that since they assert a Reward to be given according to the measure of every ones Work, therefore in the giving the Reward respect is had not only to the Promise, or Liberality, or Indulgence of God, but likewise to the Dignity and Efficacy of the Works themselves.

I answer;

1. That *Bellarmino* does in this Inference suppose that in giving a Reward respect is had to the Promise as well as to the Efficacy of the Works. Now if he meant thereby that the Reward does at all depend upon God's Promise, and that without a Promise no Claim could have been made to it, then does he at the same time, as he would establish the Merit of good Works, destroy it. For where there is true Merit, there he who gives it, was bound to have given it, whether he had promised it before or no.

2. That if all the fore-mentioned Places could be interpreted (as all they cannot, although some of them may) with respect only to good Works, and not to bad ones also; then might the Reward said to be given to every one according to his Works be considered with respect to those several degrees of Glory, which good Men shall be made partakers of in another Life. As God has, out of his infinite Liberality, been pleased to promise an eternal Reward, so has he likewise taken care that they who make the greatest improvement in Vertue and Goodness shall be received into a more happy Estate than they who have made less. [Thus the Apostle,

1 Cor.

1 Cor. 3. 8. discoursing of the several ways by which the first Preachers of the Gospel had been useful, saith, that *one planteth, and another watereth, but both these were one*; i. e. had the same excellent design in hand, viz. to make Men Converts unto Christianity, and to establish them in the most holy Faith; and then adds, — *And every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own labour*; i. e. As every one has been more serviceable in the Ministry, so shall his Reward be greater.] But then here is nothing of Merit in the case: for both the lesser Degrees of Glory, as well as the greater, depend upon God's Establishment; and although this be an excellent Motive to make us more industrious to serve and please God, yet we have no reason to value our selves upon any such account. For although he should be pleased for such our Industry to bestow some of the higher degrees of Glory upon us, yet we did not deserve even the lesser at his hands.

3. That although some of the forementioned Passages, having regard only to Mens good Works, may be interpreted with respect to the different degrees of Glory in another World; yet there are other which have respect to Men's bad Deeds as well as to their good ones: Such is that in *Matthew 16. 27.* — *And then he shall reward every Man according to his Work.* For our Saviour having in the forepart of the Verse declared his coming to Judgment, *For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father with his Angels,* he immediately adds, — *And then he shall reward every Man according to his works*; i. e. as it is expressed, *John 5. 29. Then shall come forth*

forth they that have done good unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.

Now if the fore-mentioned Passages are considered with respect to evil, as well as good Deeds, then they do only denote that different Success which good and bad Men will have in the other Life; the former of which will be eternally happy, the latter eternally miserable. But this wholly depends upon God's Decrees; and however Sinners may be said to merit Damnation, there is nothing here implied to be in Man, which can any ways be said truly to merit so inestimable a Reward as is prepared for such as live holy Lives.

Good Deeds it's true may be compared with their own Reward, as well as with bad Deeds. But these places of Scripture do not so much consider them as compared with their own Reward, as with bad Deeds; and therefore all that they intimate, is, that in the other World the Event will not be alike to the Good and to the Bad, but that as has been every ones Behaviour here, so shall he be either punished or rewarded hereafter. And therefore that was a good Distinction of Pope Gregory, — *That it is one thing to reward a Man according to his Works, and another to reward him according to the Merit of his Works, or for the sake of his Works.* To reward one according to the Merit of Works, or for the sake of Works, denotes some Proportion betwixt the Reward and Works: but to reward according to Works, signifies no more than that things will not happen out alike to all, that all will not be saved, nor all damned, but that all good Men will be

be saved, and all wicked and impenitent Sinners damned.

A third Argument fetched from Scripture for the Proof of good Works being meritorious, is deduced from such places as do declare an eternal Reward to be so bestowed upon good Works, that they place the very reason why eternal Life is bestowed in the good Works themselves.

Matth. 25. 34, 35, &c. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.

For I was hungry, and ye gave me Meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink, I was a Stranger, &c.

And in the same Chapter, *ver. 21.*—*Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

Rev. 7. 14. These are they which came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

Ver. 15. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve him Day and Night in his Temple; and he that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell amongst them.

In these places, saith Bellarmine, the reason of the Reward is declared to be the doing of good Works, therefore they are meritorious.

I answer,

First, That in the first Passage, *Come ye Blessed, &c.* the Reward spoken of is called an *Inheritance*, for it

it is said, *Come and inherit the Kingdom.* Now, as I before observed, good Men being Christ's Children by Adoption, and their Reward being their Inheritance, it depends upon God's Bounty towards them, and not their own Merit. And this the Elect themselves are so sensible of, that even in this Chapter they seem to be amazed at God's loving-kindness towards them, as knowing that all the Good which they could do, bore no Proportion to that immense Reward which was promised to be bestowed upon them.

Secondly, That although *Bellarmino* in that other Passage of *St. Matthew* inserts the Word, *Because; Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee Ruler, &c.* Yet is not any such Word to be found in the Greek Text, nor in our Translation. And therefore the reason for his grounding his Argument for Merit upon that Passage, is wholly taken away.

Thirdly, That in the Passage quoted out of the Revelations, *These are they which came out of great Tribulation, therefore are they before the Throne of God, &c.* *Bellarmino* leaves out [*have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.*] Which Words do plainly denote Christ's Merits to be necessary for the rendering their good Actions acceptable to God, and consequently that they were not meritorious in themselves.

Fourthly, That these Particles, *For, Because,* do not always denote one thing to be the true and proper cause

cause of another, but only the Connexion that is betwixt one thing and another. Thus 1 Tim. 1. 13. *But I obtained Mercy, because I did it ignorantly in Unbelief.* Now no Man can assert the Faults of Infidels, committed through Ignorance, to be the immediate cause of God's Mercy towards them. No more from these Passages, where there is only declared a Connexion betwixt good Deeds and an eternal Reward, ought it to be concluded that the former are the meritorious cause of the latter. They are such things as must precede an eternal Reward. They are the Conditions upon which it is promised to be bestowed, and so far forth they may be reckoned the cause thereof, that it cannot be obtained without them. But they cannot truly be said to be the cause thereof, so as that it does depend upon them as a necessary Effect. Neither do the forementioned Particles which do only connect good Deeds, and an eternal Reward together, and shew one to be the Consequent of the other, at all denote any such thing.

The fourth Argument for the Proof of our good Deeds being meritorious, is fetched from such Scriptures, as do declare that a Reward in Justice ought to be given to Mens good Deeds.

2 Thess. 1. 4. *So that we our selves glory in you in the Churches of God, for your Patience and Faith in all your Persecutions and Tribulations that ye endure.*

Ver. 5. *Which is a manifest Token of the righteous Judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:*

Ver. 6. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense Tribulation to them that trouble you,*

Verse

Verse 7. *And to you who are troubled rest with us.*

2 Tim. 4. 7. *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith.*

Ver. 8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.*

Heb. 6. 10. *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of Love.*

Now as to these and the like places, where mention is made of God's *Righteousness*, and that as a just Judge, he will reward the Actions of righteous Persons, it may be replied,

That God may be said as a just Judge, to reward such Actions, not because such Actions do in themselves deserve any such Reward, but,

First, Because our Saviour has merited it for us. Although there are no Merits in us, yet there are in our Saviour. He by his Death and Passion has made an Atonement for our Transgressions, and has established in his Blood a new Covenant betwixt God and us; and therefore eternal Life being the purchase of his Sufferings for us, God may in Justice be said to give us it, although what we do our selves be no ways deserving of it.

Secondly, Because God has promised to bestow an eternal Reward upon such good Actions. He is said to be just and righteous who keeps his Promises. Now God has solemnly promised that he will bestow an everlasting Reward upon all such as be-
have

have themselves dutifully towards him, and live up to the Conditions of the Gospel; and thereby, as Saint *Augustin* speaks, has made *himself their Debtor, not by receiving any thing, but by promising.* And therefore they who do behave themselves as they ought to do, have a Right and Title to such a Reward, but it is only upon the account of God's Promise, and not upon the account of their own good Deeds. For should God even after he had promised a Reward, refuse to bestow it, he would indeed (what it is impossible to suppose of him) act contrary to his most excellent Nature, and must needs be thought to want much of that Perfection which is always inherent in him, and Men could not any longer entertain those worthy apprehensions of him as they did formerly, but at the same time they could not complain of any Injury done them, because since they did not deserve to have any such Promise made to them, neither could they merit to have it observed after it was made.

Aug. in p. 83.
Debitorem
Dominus ipse
fecit non acci-
piendo, sed
promittendo.

In this therefore consists God's Justice in giving us a Reward, not in that we could oblige him to it by our best Performances, but in that he has obliged himself to it by Promise, which it would be contrary to his Divine Perfections not to make good.

The fifth Argument to prove good Works to be meritorious, is fetched from those Scriptures where eternal Life is promised to good Works.

Mat. 19. 17. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.*

Ver. 29. *And every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Names sake, shall receive an hundred fold.*

fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life.

1 Tim. 4. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

James 1. 12. *Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

In these Places, saith Bellarmine, a Promise being made with the condition of doing something, does not only make the thing promised to be due upon the account of such a Promise, but likewise that he who performs the Work, may be said to have merited the thing promised, and to have just reason to demand it, as what does of right belong to him.

I answer;

1. That Bellarmine himself in this place is so modest as not positively to affirm, that where there is a Promise there can be any true Merit. All that he here asserts, is, that he who performs the Work may be said to have merited the thing promised. Now we think it very improper to affirm that any one can be said truly to merit what without a Promise he could never have obtained.

2. Altho in these places a Promise is made to several Performances, yet who ever fulfilled the conditions to which they are made? who ever has kept the Commandments? who ever has been godly? who ever has endured Temptation after that manner, and to that degree, as to dare to affirm the Reward, even upon the account of God's Promise, to be his due? After we have done the best we can, we shall find our Performances to be very weak and imperfect, and that we have reason daily to put up that Petition to God Almighty, *Forgive us our Trespases.* And if so, how kind so ever God may have been in promising us an inestimable Reward, yet since upon the account of our many failings we cannot come

up to the conditions upon which he has promised it, we have but little reason to pretend to merit it, especially since,

3. All our best Actions, altho performed by God's Assistance, bear no proportion to what he has been pleased to promise us. Had God made us no promise of a Reward, we were bound upon the account of our Creation, and those Mercies which we daily receive from him, to have served him according to the best of our power; should then our good Deeds be never so perfect, they would be abundantly recompensed even in this Life. What equality then betwixt the Actions of finite Creatures, and the eternal Kindness of an infinite God in the World to come?

To promise us any thing, destroys the nature of true Merit; but to promise so vast a Reward, and to such who cannot exactly perform the conditions upon which it is promised, sets us at a greater distance from it.

The sixth Argument to prove good Works to be meritorious, is fetched from those Scriptures where mention is made of good Men being worthy of a Reward.

Luke 10. 7. *The Labourer is worthy of his Hire.*

2 Thess. 1. 5. — *That ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which ye also suffer.*

Rev. 3. 4. *Thou hast a few Names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their Garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

In these and the like places, saith Bellarmine, to be worthy of a Reward signifies to merit it.

I answer,

That to be worthy is of a much larger Signification than to merit. For to merit a Reward, signifies (as has been shewn) to do something betwixt which and

the Reward there may be some equality or proportion. But *to be worthy of it*, may denote no more than the Performance of such Conditions, unto which by the kind Acceptation of the Donor, it is made to belong, although there be no Equality betwixt it, and the Performance of such Conditions. When God is pleased so to assist us with his Grace, as that we perform what is acceptable in his Sight, and what he has thought fit to reward: then may we be said to be worthy of such a Reward, because he has made us to be so. Hence St. Bernard, [*We are worthy by his Dignation, not by our own Dignity.*] But could we have been said truly to have merited it, what we had done, must have been of our own Strength and Power, and we must have done it in that Degree of Perfection, as that without any Promise from God, we might have justly challenged it as our due from him.

Bern. de ded.
Eccl. ser. 5.
--- Illius digna-
tione non nostra
dignitate.

The seventh and last Argument mentioned by Bellarmine for the Proof of *Merit* is fetched from such Scriptures where God is said to be a just Judge, and no Acceptor of Persons.

Rev. 2. 11. *There is no respect of Persons with God.*
Gal. 2. 6. *God accepteth no Man's Person.*

1 Pet. 1. 17. *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth according to every Man's Work, &c.*

Acts 10. 34. *Then Peter opened his Mouth, and said, Of a truth, I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons.*

For then, saith Bellarmine, there is respect had to Persons when a Judge gives a Reward without *Merits*, or a greater Reward where there are few *Merits*, and therefore God in the Retribution of Rewards, considers Mens *Merits*, and according to the Diversity of their *Merits*, assigns the Mansions of eternal Glory.

I answer,

1. That as to the Distribution of Rewards no Judge can properly be said to be an Acceptor of Persons, who gives any one more than he deserves, unless he were obliged to the contrary, or did another an Injury by defrauding him that had more *Merits* of what was his due, to give to him that had less. Now if in the forementioned Passages, God be considered with Respect to the final Distribution of Rewards according to Mens Works, if he shall bestow a Reward far surpassing all their best Actions, how was he obliged to the contrary?

He would indeed act contrary to his own Truth and Faithfulness, should he not bestow such a Reward because he has promised it. But what can forbid him to distribute his own Gifts as he pleaseth?

And as for his doing another an Injury by bestowing upon any one more than he deserves, this cannot be; because he has an eternal Reward in store for all such (how many soever they be) who perform the Conditions upon which out of meer Grace and Favour he has made it to become due.

2. That in most of the forementioned Passages, if not in all, where God is said to be *no Acceptor of Persons*, respect is had not so much to the final Distribution of Rewards according to Mens Works, as to his calling the *Gentiles* to be made Partakers of the Benefits of the Gospel.

The *Jews* knew themselves to have been God's peculiar People; they believed the Promise of the Messiah to belong only to them, and therefore were wont to despise others who were not of the Stock of *Abraham* as well as themselves. But at our Saviour's coming the partition Wall was broken down, and God declared to be no Acceptor of Persons, in that all Persons of what

Qua-

Quality or Nation soever were alike capable of being made Members of the new Covenant in Christ.

Having thus explained those Texts which are brought by *Bellarmino* and others to prove good Works to be truly meritorious, and shewn that they give no Countenance to any such Doctrine, it were as easie to shew that they have as much abused *Antiquity* in this matter, as they have the *Scriptures*; but my Business being only to vindicate the Scripture from their false Interpretations, I shall conclude this Discourse with these following Observations,

1. That this Doctrine has so little Foundation in the Scripture, that the Word *Merit* is not so much as to be found there. *Bellarmino* indeed pretends to shew us the Word in two places, but he quotes them both according to the Latin Translation which we do not allow of.

The first is *Eccles. 16. 14.* The English whereof according to the Latin Translation is, *All Merit shall make place for every one according to the Merit of his Works.* But according to the Original it is, *Every Man shall find according to his Works.* Now we have already shewn the great Difference betwixt receiving according to the *Merit of our Works*; and receiving *according to our Works.* The first denotes an Equality betwixt the Reward and good Works, the second only signifies the Reward to be the consequent of them.

The other Passage is *Heb. 13. 16.* which according to the Interpretation of bad *Latin*, denotes *God to be delighted by such Sacrifices*; but according to the Interpretation of the *Greek*, no more is meant than that, *with such Sacrifices God is well pleased*; which he may be when there is nothing of Merit in the case.

2. That there are a great many places of Scripture which do directly contradict the Doctrine of *Merit*.

Omnis misericordia faciet locum unicuique secundum meritum operum suorum.
Πάντες ἐλεήσει οὐρανὸς κατὰ τὸν ἕκαστον κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ διαδοῖ.

Talibus hostiis promeretur Deus.

Τοιαύταις θυσίαις ευαρεστίαις ὁ Θεός.

Psal. 38. 4.
Marth. 6. 12.

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For besides such as set forth our many Sins and Infirmities, and declare the Necessity of God's Forgiveness; such as assert our good Works to be done by the Assistance of God's Grace. That we were obliged to have done them although we had had no Prospect of a Reward; That an eternal Reward is our Inheritance, and that there is no Proportion betwixt it and the best of our Actions. There are other places which expressly affirm *eternal Life* to be the *Gift of God*: other which declare Justification to be of Grace, and consequently Glorification to be so too; *for whom he has justified, those he has glorified* Other which teach us the Necessity of daily praying to God for a Supply of things necessary for our present Subsistence, and consequently that if we do not merit our *daily Bread*, much less can we merit *eternal Life*. Other which bid us, after we have done our best, to own our selves to be *unprofitable Servants*. Other that will not allow even our Sufferings for the sake of Religion *to be worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us*.

Lastly, There are several other which do in so ample a manner set forth the Merits of our Saviour's undertaking for us, as they do wholly take us off from placing any Trust or Confidence in any of our best Performances.

Phil. 2. 13.

John 15. 5.

2 Cor. 3. 5.

Luke 17. 10.

Rom. 8. 16,

17, 18.

Rom. 6. 23.

Math. 6. 11.

Luke 17. 10.

Rom. 8. 18.

T H E E N D.

L O N D O N,

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